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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE

Conducted by
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STUDY II

Required Books

Allen, *Civics and Health*.
Penman, *Poverty the Challenge of the Church*.

Preliminary to the study of Allen's book on public health it will be profitable to get a new appreciation of the large place given to physical welfare in both Judaism and New Testament Christianity. Israel's attempt to conserve bodily health is manifest in a considerable body of legislation governing such matters as consanguinity in marriage (Deut. 27:20 f.), chastity (Deut. 22:13 f.), the protection of slaves against bodily injury (Deut. 21:20 f.), camp hygiene (Deut. 23:9-14), child protection (Deut. 12:29), sex hygiene (Gen. 17:9 f.; Num. 5:12, Lev., chaps. 18 and 19; Deut. 22:9 and 25:11), ceremonial cleanliness (Lev., chap. 21), pure food (Deut., chap. 14), virulent disease (Deut. 24:8), etc. The Sabbath laws may be regarded as providing in no small measure against fatigue and overstrain.

In the New Testament the health idea is brought over into Christianity in our Lord's conception of salvation. The significance of this conception as used by Jesus is consistently that of wholeness, soundness, normality, health. It is well to bear this in mind as an offset to the dangers of a later theology in which salvation is considered as hyper or contra normal and also as encouragement to any faithful effort to carry out Christ's ideal for society.

This "saving health," indicating a sound condition of the whole person, a normal relation to God, a full vigorous life, became narrowed through inferior translations and under evangelistic religion and exclusively eschatological hope, into a conception of spiritual safety alone and is now frequently in use as "saving one's soul."

The contemporary revival of the more adequate idea of salvation has been conspicuously fostered by such religious organizations as the Young Men's Christian Association, in which fulness of life, physical as well as spiritual, has brought into use a program quite contrary to the limited "escape" philosophy found in early Christianity and followed almost uniformly by the church. While it can be shown, I think, that Christ's fundamental position not only permits but favors

this larger view, it is only fair to admit that the growing emphasis on the physical is more closely related to the Greek than to the early Christian culture.

However, none of the great preachers and pastors of the Christian church has performed his ministry unmindful of the sick and suffering and, quite apart from this or that formal theology, has in this respect patterned his work after that of Jesus, whose fragmentary biography gives an imposing view of his ministry to bodily ills. The hospitals and asylums of the church bear rich testimony to what may be called her ambulance service through many ages. It remains to be seen whether she will be as efficient in a greater work of mercy in these times when by community-wide dimensions we undertake to prevent the misery which need not and should not be permitted.

It is because society's defense against disease has so largely passed into the hands of local government and because the entire practice of medicine is passing from an individualistic to a social stage that Allen's book is included in this course. For, if only an intelligent partnership between church and state can be established for promoting the health interests of society, the resultant benefits will surpass imagination. The almost hysterical pressure of this human interest as registered by the enormous sales of patent nostrums, the patronage of quack doctors, and the amazing growth of non-social and flimsy religious cults which offer a health inducement to the individual proselytes, should stir religious leaders to a more earnest participation in the legitimate health propaganda of civic bodies.

If morals are the foundation of private and public health, it is also true that health conditions morality in many ways. In the former respect the church's teaching of Christian ethics is a health service, but in the latter respect we have been slow to recognize the significance of physical health for good behavior. The records of delinquency bristle with proof of the causal relation existing between uncorrected minor physical defects and misdemeanors. In *The Individual Delinquent* by Healy, in *Laggards in Our Public Schools* by Ayres, and in *Medical Inspection of Schools* by Gulick and Ayres, there is sufficient evidence to convert any moralist to a live interest in the health side of character building.

For example, by virtue of defective sight or hearing undetected and uncorrected, a child in school may be rated as stupid, may lose grade and therefore interest, may become truant and therefore estranged from both home and school and driven to street experiences and idleness, which result in delinquency. Or, depleted by adenoids or by the many diseases that germinate in carious teeth, he may become retarded and discouraged and turn out to be of little worth to himself or to society.

The reader will probably not be pleased with the rather negative and censorious manner in which Allen's book starts out. The subject of hygiene is by no means regarded as the least interesting of those with which teachers and pupils have to deal. Nevertheless the chronic American weakness of trusting to laws and more laws without adequate provision for their enforcement is an embarrassing fact that must be kept in mind. The public is so often deceived and so superficially satisfied in this way that nothing short of an actual investigation of the health work really performed in the school system and by the city board can form a just basis for a sound conclusion. His mention of civic responsibility for health and of our social interdependence in this regard is worthy of note and the table on

page 29 might well be used in making a health rating for your own church and for some one school in your neighborhood.

It would also be well to ascertain the frequency and thoroughness of physical examinations in your schools and also what use is made of the facts thus discovered. The bulletins of your health department should come to you regularly in order that in situations requiring publicity and necessitating conscientious compliance with the law the church may do her full part. The easy way in which otherwise good people will endanger others by disobeying quarantine or by neglecting the necessary precautions in tubercular cases leaves room for the church to improve public morals by pointing out the antisocial nature of such offenses.

The author's treatment of institutionalized health work should be supplemented by further consideration of the work of the visiting nurse. It has been demonstrated that hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries cannot of themselves meet the need. Convalescents need a great deal of care, friendly visitation, and encouragement in order to resume healthy mental and physical living. The benefits of medical and surgical skill are often forfeited because patients are not eased back into their normal duties gradually and with sympathetic assistance. This has been pointed out by Dr. Richard C. Cabot in *Social Service and the Art of Healing*. Church people could do much good in this field.

With respect to infant welfare the common experience is that in order to save the babies the necessary information and the scientific methods must be taken to the home itself and adopted by the mother. In many instances she must be taught how to care for the child, and supervised in carrying out instructions. The visiting nurse, whether attached to the school system, the board of health, or the church, is the most potent life-saving agent in the field of infant welfare. In districts demanding such service and for churches able to provide it, there is perhaps no other ministry that can better interpret Christianity to the needy. The infant morality rate is the best single index of a community's social efficiency, or, stated in religious terms, of its Christianity.

The difficult subject of sex morality and hygiene merits a more extensive treatment than the author gives it. He is probably right as far as he goes, but in view of the unsatisfactory effect of lectures and literature designed for the child, it becomes necessary to educate parents and to reinforce their sense of obligation in this matter. Moreover, there is perhaps no other social scourge more definitely depending upon religious motives for its removal than that which is summed up under the social evil. See Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*. The major effort in the personal field (not to discuss the economic aspects of the problem) must be in persuading parents to tell their children the truth in answer to their honest questions and prior to sex consciousness and the inevitable vulgarity of promiscuous school acquaintance or chance companion. The effectiveness of such instruction depends quite as much upon the kind of person offering it and upon the mode and manner in which this is done as upon the facts themselves.

Taken as a whole, Allen's book should serve as an introduction to public health, as it pertains to juveniles, and should stimulate the reader to actual co-operation with the agencies at hand. For an understanding of industrialism in relation to the health of adult workers the book by Josephine Goldmark, *Fatigue and Efficiency* (Russell Sage Foundation) is the American classic.

The second reading assignment calls for some review of the wealth-making processes of society and the formulation of plans whereby the vast amount of poverty entailed in such processes may be banished. Penman's first chapter should help the reader to some discriminating idea of what poverty really is, so that it may not be confused with destitution or pauperism or gauged by the minimum standard of bare physical subsistence. The nature and extent of this social malady, substantially well presented by Penman, is very graphically set forth in Nearing's book, *Poverty and Riches*.

Under causes of poverty more, perhaps, should be made of the workman's loss of his tools in the factory system, together with the fact that the enormous increase of his productive power by this system has gone to enrich the capitalist rather than the worker. On the face of it and with the application of Christian principles to the process, one would have supposed that a system by which wealth increased twenty-five fold while population increased fourfold would have left no place for poverty. For example, in the manufacture of sewing cotton, labor applied through the factory machine is seventy-four times as productive as it was under the old method of individual manufacture, but the vast extra wealth thus produced did not in any degree reach the laborer or better his condition. On the contrary, the effect was to impoverish him and to enlist his whole family in factory work. The contest of Christian conscience with this industrial system in the day of its early and terrific exploitation is best described in Hodder's *Life of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*. This work, in three volumes or abridged in one, is, perhaps, the best commentary on the industrial system which we inherited from Great Britain. Pastors and young people will be richly rewarded by its study.

Penman's remedies for poverty are not drastic, and so far as America is concerned co-operative undertakings and profit sharing have had almost no effect on poverty. Various forms of social insurance may prove more effective. Philanthropy is out of the question. Penman's hope rests with the convertibility of the capables and their voluntary reform at the cost of economic loss to themselves; and one very important difficulty in that expectation is the fact that by virtue of the system the man of good will is practically held up by the "business first" practices of ruthless competitors.

According to *Public Health Bulletin No. 76*, p. 34 (Washington, D.C., 1916), one-quarter of our adult male workers in industries, being heads of families, earned less than \$400 per year, one-half less than \$600, four-fifths less than \$800, and only one-tenth as much as \$1,000 per year. The will to arrive at an equitable distribution of wealth depends in large part upon the minister's success in implanting the ideals of Jesus in the hearts of men and in the laws of society. There are two or three important factors in the method by which one may attempt to do this. The first is an absolutely reliable knowledge of the facts based upon such sources as government reports, and the second is a sober and conservative presentation of the facts in public address. The third element is an exposition of the teachings of Jesus with such clearness and in such a spirit of love that people will feel bound to revise their practices so as to conform with their professed faith.

The world is sick of unmitigated self-interest as a rule of life. Society is beginning to learn that it will take the service ideal of Jesus or perish. Captains of industry may yet accept the code of captains of ships. A demonstration of

Christianity in industry will do more toward Christianizing the world than thousands of sermons preached or tracts distributed. The Christian layman and the Christian minister are under exactly the same obligation to serve their fellow-men. This may mean more than the mere improvement of the present industrial system. In the meantime Penman's suggestion that we apply Consumers' League methods to the purchase of bonds and stocks (pp. 126 f.) may look toward some slight betterment but fails to indicate any method for determining a "fair return to capital." A "Good Investments" circular just now in hand quotes from the *Minneapolis Tribune* of January 30, 1914, as follows: "Just about the time the Battle Creek man started to manufacture a substitute for coffee, a woman living in Denver invested \$1,000 with him. From 1897 to 1914 inclusive, she received \$33,000 in dividends, 3,300 per cent in seventeen years. In 1899 she received a stock dividend of 300 per cent and her holdings today have a market value of \$64,000. The result of \$1,000 invested seventeen years ago is \$97,000."

Other instances, as of \$100 in a motor company becoming worth \$15,000 in three years, or in a smelter company reaching a value of \$100,000 in a few years, or in a telephone company where the \$100 investment became worth \$400,000, indicate that such wealth-making processes of successful capital bear no moral relation either to merit, to the human needs and rights of the labor employed, or to the welfare of society at large. It is a far cry from creating a maximum inequality for one's own benefit to rendering a maximum service for the good of others. Mammon, which is the placing of material gains above human welfare, dictates the former and the moral nature of God dictates the latter. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

Penman's program (pp. 129-38), while recognizing the complexity of the poverty problem and the interrelation of all elements in the social milieu, does not of course amount to a solution. No one pretends to have a solution, excepting perhaps the advocate of state socialism; and since the great war set in and the state has become in so large a measure employer and dictator, even he is less certain than formerly. Probably relief lies in the direction of socialism, in which direction society is traveling; but democracy and public honor are as yet not strong enough to guarantee that the state as owner of the means of production may not in turn be owned and manipulated by selfish groups. Under whatever political form improvement may come, it will always depend upon the moral character and spiritual ideals of the citizenship for actual worth in application.

In some clear way the church is beginning to sense this and to incorporate within her message the next steps of social progress which are imperative for the Christian conscience because palpably just. *The Social Creed of the Churches*, enunciated by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1908, and expounded by H. F. Ward in his book of the same title, shows a weight and consensus of opinion rather beyond what most people accredit to the church.

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America stands:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the suppression of the sweating system.

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life.

For a release from employment one day in seven.

For the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safeguarded against encroachments of every kind.

For the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crises of industrial change.

For a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries, and mortality.

For suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury.

For the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the abatement of poverty.

For the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

Questions for Discussion

1. How is your community organized for the promotion of public health?
2. What health service is performed in the work and ministry of your church?
3. What section of your community has the most sickness? Why?
4. How do sickness and poverty interact on each other?
5. Outline your duties as a Christian minister confronted with the contending claims of capital and labor.
6. How have these studies in health and poverty influenced your plans for church work and for preaching?